

THE CONDUCT
OF THE
PROTESTANT METHODISTS,
IN LEAVING THE
OLD CONNEXION,
BROUGHT TO THE
TEST OF THEIR OWN PROFESSIONS;
IN A
SECOND LETTER
ADDRESSED
TO THE PRIVATE MEMBERS
OF THAT COMMUNITY.

BY
DANIEL ISAAC.

LEEDS:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY HENRY SPINK:

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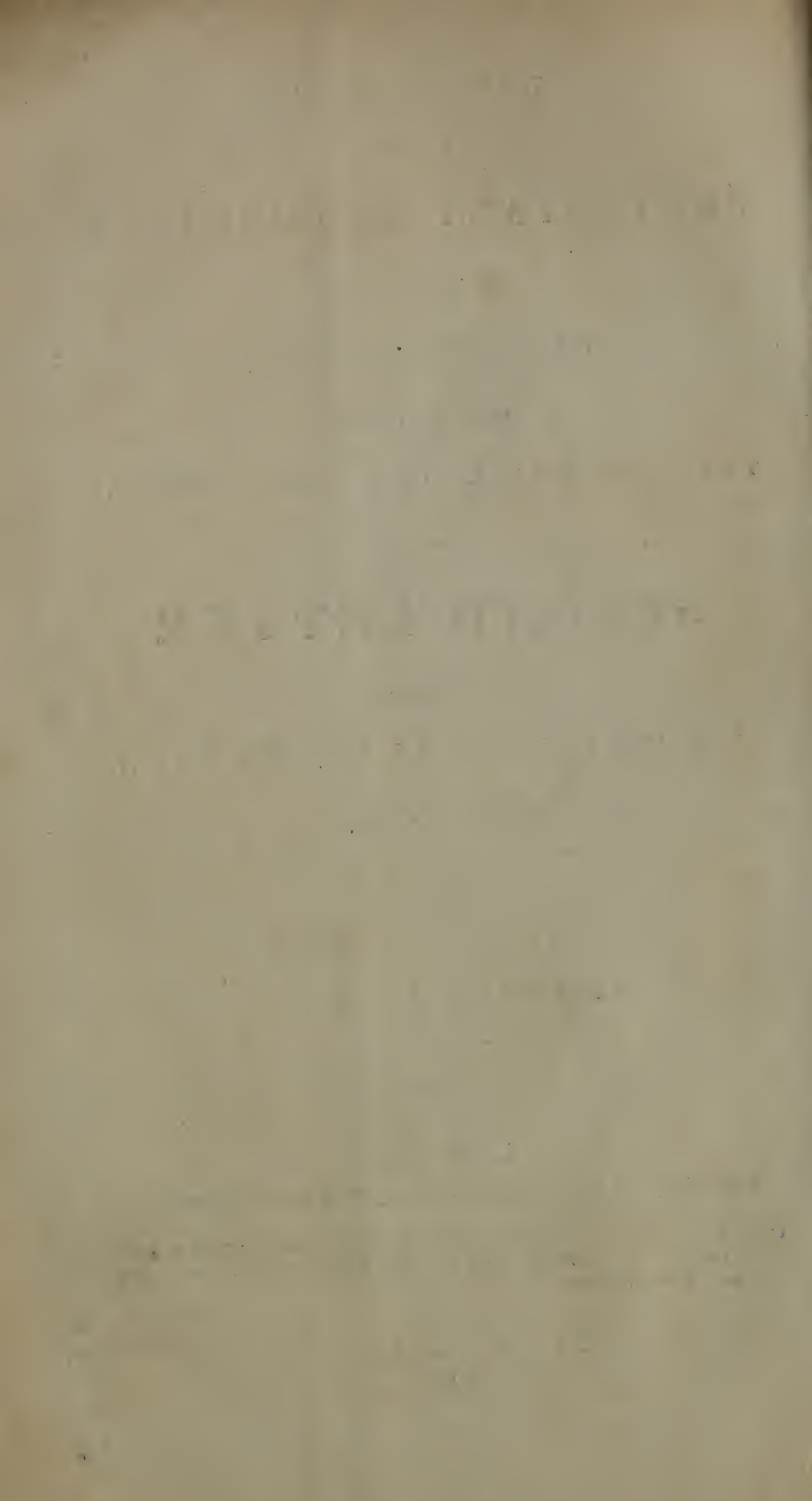
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A SECOND LETTER, &c.

Respected Friends,

The design of my first Letter was to shew that our ministry, and the more important parts of our discipline, have Scripture authority for their support ; and that in departing from us you have departed from the word of God. If my arguments cannot be overturned, and of that I am under no apprehension, the sinfulness of your secession cannot be denied ; and your plain path of duty is to repent of your rashness, to flee from your seducers, and to return to the fold of Christ which you have deserted. I know you will feel some reluctance to retrace your steps ; shame, and other kindred feelings, will operate powerfully to prevent a retreat ; but since conscience, if you will allow it to speak, must condemn your late conduct, you can only enjoy peace of mind in humbling yourselves, confessing your fault, and availing yourselves of this invitation to return. All sects are agreed, I believe, that unity among christians, as far as it can be maintained upon scripture principles, is desirable ; and that separation, when these principles do not require it, is sinful. Nothing certainly is plainer in the Bible than are the exhortations to christians, to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and to avoid divisions. But since the best christians have their infirmities and failings, if every fault we could find in a church would justify a breach of its unity, divisions must be perpetual and innumerable. What is more strongly inculcated in Scripture than charity ? If we have not this, our noisy profession is only as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal ; and if we are living under its influence, it will cover a multitude of sins, and thus, in most cases, prevent all occasion of strife and schism. What will justify a division, is a question little understood, though of infinite importance. Let us examine it.

1. It is a duty to separate from a church, when we have substantial reasons for believing that she is separated from Christ. The apostate church mentioned in Rev. xviii. 4, is in this awful state ; and the call of duty to the

few in it who adhere to the Lord, is, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." When God has left a church, it is time for his people to leave too; but if they run before Him, they get on too fast; for a good man need not fear to remain where the Divine presence may be enjoyed. If you can prove that God has left the methodists, you can justify your separation from them; but if you have abandoned them, and He continue with them, you have much cause for alarm at the precipitate step you have taken.

It is no uncommon thing for the dividers to be the culpable party. There is much more said in Scripture respecting divisions being made by wicked than by good men. "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also *of your own selves* shall men arise, speaking perverse things, *to draw away disciples after them.*" Acts xx. 29, 30. It would be easy to multiply passages of this sort. When one person wishes to disinherit another, we know how common it is to raise a clamour against him, and charge him with things of which he is innocent. A man's motives may be justly suspected, when he is bawling against his neighbour with a view to get his situation. Now what is the state of the case between us and your protesters? They have been vociferating against us till their throats are dry, have persuaded many of you to join them in a revolt, and have told you that you shall have itinerant ministers such as St. Paul and John Wesley sent forth in the name of the Lord. And how have they served you? Why, without consulting either of their professed patrons, they have stripped the office of all its powers, and unceremoniously divided these among themselves; they have *promised* you that they will administer them more to your advantage; and they have set up a few puppet missionaries, without any of the prerogatives of their office, who can only move as the strings are pulled by these showmen. Had they been honest men, and themselves believed what they have persuaded you to believe, they would have set up such missionaries as those who were employed by the apostle and our founder; instead of which, as I have made it abundantly manifest, they have not paid the slightest regard to either the Bible or the Minutes, though these they protested should be their guides. They have acted just like a set of rogues,

who first abuse a man with words, then rob him of his money and strip him of his clothes; and to save their own necks, try to persuade the judge and jury, that the clothes were *intended* for them, because they *fit* them better than they did him; that he will do his work *better*, in a state of nudity, than with the incumbrances about him of which they deprived him; that the money found upon him belonged to the public; and that they had a scheme by which they could employ it to the greater benefit of the community, than he could have done. A verdict of *not guilty* must, of course, follow such a defence!

It is not a sufficient proof of God having forsaken a church, that there are some errors in its doctrines, worship, ministers, and people.

1. OF DOCTRINES.—A church may hold all the essential doctrines of christianity, with some errors; and yet these may not be of sufficient magnitude to neutralize the truth. Upon this point I need not enlarge, because you do not charge us with corrupting the word of God, but profess great zeal for the doctrines of methodism. Herein you differ essentially from the protestants who effected the reformation. Their protestations lay chiefly against the *doctrines* of the papists, as the source of almost every other error. The corruption of worship sprung out of the corruption of faith. There would have been no idolatrous worship of the host, but for the doctrine of transubstantiation; no prayers for the dead, but for the doctrine of purgatory; &c. &c. &c. An impure ritual can never be associated with a pure creed. It would have sounded odd at that time of day had the protestants expressed a warm attachment to the whole body of popish doctrine! This very circumstance ought to excite your suspicion that you are under delusion. There is another consideration also, of a very alarming nature:—many of the heads of your party were suspected of heterodoxy respecting the Trinity. It was naturally expected that this most momentous subject would be noticed, in some way, in your list of doctrines; but though it extends to fourteen particulars, *the Trinity is left out*. Does not this startle you?

2. OF WORSHIP.—No one doubts, I presume, but that worship may be spiritual in its nature, and acceptable to God, though the form and manner may possess much of imperfection. Here I must take up the organ question.

I object to organs, and all other instruments of music, in public worship; because I think the christian sacrifice of praise should be "the fruit of our lips." But I always thought that these appendages did not very seriously vitiate the service of God, and, therefore, ought not to be made the occasion of disturbing, and much less of destroying, the peace of the church. If a person, however, be of opinion that it is sinful to worship where such baubles are used, and on that account peaceably withdraw from his religious associates, I should honour his motives, and esteem him as a conscientious man. Now how does the matter stand, as it regards your people? Instruments had been played for many years up to the time of the division, in the chapels where they were accustomed to worship, without their protesting against the practice. And the local preachers, who were most vociferous against an organ being set up in Brunswick chapel, had regularly served a chapel at Burley in which there was an organ, for "full ten years before the organ question at Leeds was agitated." I have the highest authority for stating that this chapel was "built originally for the *express use* of the Wesleyan Methodist *Local Preachers*." An engagement on the part of the superintendent of the circuit to grant a regular supply of local brethren, was *the condition* on which it was originally erected. This was, therefore, a local preachers' chapel. It is possible they might have been convinced about the time the dispute broke out, of the sinfulness of using instrumental music in public worship; but, had that really been the case, they would first have cleansed their own sanctuary. "*First* cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." Matt. vii 5. Instead of taking this course, they never quarrelled with the organ at Burley; and continue to serve the chapel without manifesting the slightest offence at the "glorious box of sounds."

This is one of the most extraordinary affairs that the history of human inconsistency can furnish. A gentleman devotes a chapel, with an organ in it, to the use of the *local preachers*; and they seem to be mightily pleased with their whistles. Some gentlemen build another chapel in the vicinity, for the use of the *travelling preachers*, principally, which they supply with a similar piece of furniture. At this the consciences of the local brethren take alarm, and become tortured almost to distraction;

and the whole nation* is disturbed with their most bitter lamentations, that the proud, haughty, worldly conference preachers, and their friends, should be entertained like themselves. Here you perceive how the consciences of these protestants work. They get our preachers turned out of the chapel at Burley, and themselves “rejoice at the sound of the organ” *there*; their consciences then immediately turn, like the vane of a weathercock, to the opposite point of the compass, become hysterical at the sight of the pipes in Leeds, and cannot hold fellowship any longer with these corrupters of the *pure* and *spiritual* worship of the Deity. Had they studied to contradict their professions, and make themselves appear ridiculous, how could they have hit on an expedient more admirably adapted to their purpose? The truth is,—they have no objection to organs for themselves; they only object to *other people* having them:—they wish to have a *monopoly* of the article!

When your people are pressed with the fact of your having an organ in your own connexion, the usual answer is, that the organ, and the chapel in which it is set up, are private property, over which you have no control.

And what control has the proprietor of the chapel over your preachers? Can he compel them to act contrary to their consciences? If their consciences obliged them to leave us on account of the organ at Brunswick, they must have felt the same injunction to come out from Burley. But where have they learned that it is lawful to worship with an organ, if it be the property of one man; but that it is very sinful, if it happen to belong to a dozen or fifteen? I am not casuist enough to comprehend this. And so if a popish gentleman were to invite your preachers to perform mass in his private chapel, they could, I suppose, do it very conscientiously, because of the mass-house being *private* property; but if the same service were performed in a chapel settled upon trustees, it would then be *idolatrous*. Here I am quite out of my depth!—The short and full answer to all the noise and nonsense

* Ay, and America too; for it appears from a letter in the Protestant Magazine for January last, that brother Jonathan has heard the sound of the Leeds organ; and that thousands of his countrymen are deeply sympathizing with their suffering brethren on this side the water. It is to be hoped their tears will not form another Atlantic. I have not heard whether this noisy instrument has disturbed the tranquillity of Africa and Asia.

which the protesters have uttered against the organ is this :—“ If you think it sinful, you are self-condemned in using it ; if you think its use lawful, you are in the same condemnation for making a division on account of it. In either case, your wickedness is manifest ; and all your blustering deserves no other feeling than contempt.”

But it is said, that the organ was not opposed so much on its own account, as under an impression that the church prayers were to follow. It is conceded then that the organ would not justify the separation. A much greater sin, it seems, was advancing ; and it became a measure of prudence with the seceders to take care of themselves, by a timely retreat, before it should overtake them. It turns out, however, that they have run faster towards this gulph than the Brunswickers have done, and have reached it before them ; for though the liturgy is not used in our new chapel, yet in October last your legislators made the following rules : viz.—“ 1. That our brethren in London be allowed the use of Mr. Wesley’s Abridgement of the Liturgy in their chapels, where a majority of the preachers, leaders, stewards and trustees desire it, inasmuch as they have been accustomed to it from the early periods of methodism. But as a general principle, this meeting entertains a very strong objection to the liturgy being read in our chapels. 2. That the permission, in reference to the reading of the liturgy in the chapels in London, shall not be extended to any other place.”

Did infatuation ever before reach this extreme ? After such a coalition, I firmly believe that if a company of papists would but join them in abuse of us, they would receive the fraternal hug, and the next Yearly Meeting would decree, “ That our brethren,” the catholics, “ be allowed the use of” the Mass “ in their chapels, where a majority of the” priests, &c. “ desire it, inasmuch as they have been accustomed to it from the early periods of” popery. It would, however, be necessary, in order to save appearances, to enter a caveat :—“ But as a general principle, this meeting entertains a very strong objection to the” Mass “ being read in our chapels.”

The offer of the London agitators to assist those of Leeds in pulling down the old connexion, provided they might be allowed the use of the liturgy, placed the honest Yorkshiremen in a very painful dilemma. They could not say much against the organ, as they possessed one themselves ; but the liturgy !—the dread of the liturgy

had frightened them out of our church, and nearly out of their senses. And now they can obtain assistance in their godly work of dividing and destroying our societies, only on the hard condition of adopting this hated liturgy! But what is to be done? Such valuable auxiliaries must not be lost to the good cause. In such an awkward predicament they must put on a bold face, and affirm, that in granting the use of the liturgy they compromise no *principle*, though, "as a general *principle*, they entertain a very strong objection to the liturgy being read in their chapels;" and that, though such supereminent saints as these cockneys are, *may profit* by the indulgence, "as they have been accustomed to it from the early periods of methodism," yet, that *no one else could be edified by it*; on which account they have ordained, lastly, in order to complete their consistency, "that the permission in reference to the reading of the liturgy in the chapels in London, *shall not be extended to any other place*," though the people may have been accustomed to it from their childhood! Herod and Pilate united to put Christ to death; and the affair was of sufficient importance to make them friends; and He was crucified between two thieves.

The great objections against us were, for a long time, that the simplicity and spirituality of worship amongst us were fast dying away; and that we substituted in their stead, for the amusement of our people under their loss, organs and liturgies, and all the pomp of a formal service. And as soon as you had organized your new system, you adopted the very things on account of which you professed to have left us! The nonconformists of the seventeenth century dissented from the church, principally on account of its diocesan episcopacy and its liturgy. Now had these men, to whose distinctive appellative your people at one time discovered a predilection, immediately after leaving the church, established among themselves the very things which they declared occasioned their separation, and called themselves "Protestant Churchmen;" they would have acted just as our seceders have done, and would have merited and received, if not the execration, at least the derision, of the nation. These men, however, did not merely *talk* about conscience, their actions demonstrated that they were governed by its sacred dictates. But if the annals of hypocrisy were ransacked from Judas down to the present day, a parallel to the conduct of our protestants could not be discovered.

But some of you will be surprised that I, who have written against both organs and liturgies, should be opposed to you, when you rather expected that I should join your ranks; and I expect you will hear me spoken of as a turn-coat, and a deserter of your holy cause. My sentiments remain unaltered on the points under consideration; except that this dispute has convinced me more than ever of the folly and wickedness of distracting and dividing christian societies about non-essentials. Had I thought my opinions of consequence enough to justify a separation, I should have taken that step long before the organ was heard at Burley, or the liturgy was dreamed about as a form of worship for our chapels in Leeds. But suppose I had come over to you, what a pretty situation should I have been in? You have only two circuits that could support an itinerant preacher, Leeds and London; but in neither of these could I have travelled; for in the Leeds circuit you have an organ, and in London the liturgy. In such a case, therefore, I must have left you, for the same reasons that I had left the old connexion, or, like some others, must have proclaimed myself a vile hypocrite before the whole world.

3. OF MINISTERS.—It is as necessary they should *live* the gospel, as *preach* it. It is expecting too much to suppose, however, considering the infirmity of human nature, that they will all be strictly virtuous. Of the twelve apostles, one was a son of perdition, and was lost; and another disgraced himself, and the cause of Christ, by lying, cursing, and swearing. Here were two out of twelve who acted an unworthy part. Was that a sufficient reason to justify a breach of fellowship with the other ten? to set up a rival society? and to send incendiaries through the country abusing the apostles as thieves and infidel blasphemers, because one had made too free with some money intrusted to his care, and another had denied his Master with an oath? If *all* the ministers, or the *greater part* of them, in any religious community, be bad men, the expediency of remaining in it may be justly doubted; but if a large majority of them be good men, the Spirit of Christ will never prompt a man to divide from them. As regards the methodist ministers, I challenge their greatest enemies to shew that one in six, or even one in twelve, has dishonoured his profession, by any act of immorality. The great outcry has been against *a few men*, who, it is said, rule the connexion; and even these few are not

charged with immorality, but only with being too fond of power. And is this a reason why near a thousand should be subjected to indiscriminate abuse, and be abandoned as unworthy of the fellowship of saints? If any methodist preachers could have been charged with such crimes as Judas and Peter committed, our protestants would have martyred themselves with raving against them. In this age of light and charity, no lenity is shewn to the failings of a minister; and many of those who boast of being so full of the love of Christ that they are ready to burst, instead of pitying and hiding their infirmities, are the first and most zealous in spreading them abroad. And after all that has been said of the farce of preachers trying one another, I do not believe, from what I have noticed of the severity of discipline practised amongst us, that if a preacher were found guilty of an offence similar to that committed by St. Peter, he would ever again be allowed to travel in our connexion; though the apostle was restored to his office by his Divine Master, in the course of a few weeks. I have known men expelled for less faults, whom the conference have refused to employ again, though no one doubted the reality of their repentance. It has long been my opinion that our discipline, generally, instead of being too lax, is too strict.

In the Protestant Magazine for September last, there is an "Extract of a Letter from a Preacher in the Conference Connexion," in which the writer says, "With the New Testament in my hand, and the constitution of methodism before me, and, at the same time, looking at these antichristian assumptions, I feel I cannot continue much longer a conference methodist. With me it has become a religious question. To support antichristian pretensions, in my judgment, *must involve guilt*; and also, endanger *personal salvation*." This is the first attempt I have seen, and a most clumsy one it is, to frighten our people from us with threats of damnation. Does the writer mean to say, that the connexion is abandoned of God? if so, *there is no more piety among the people*, than among the preachers. All who entertain such views of us, and yet remain with us, must be hypocrites; and let the state of the connexion be what it may, the sooner it is purged of those croakers the better. Our members, however, are fawned upon and flattered:—they are pious and intelligent, and ought to resist the tyranny of a domineering priesthood! The protestants have never yet hinted

that all the virtue of the connexion went away with *them*; they will grant, therefore, I presume, that the Lord is yet amongst us; and that our people, as a body, belong to the household of faith, and not to the synagogue of Satan. In this state of things, for a man to talk of incurring guilt, and endangering his salvation, by maintaining an union cemented with the presence and blessing of Jehovah, betrays a monstrous degree of ignorance, or something worse. When this defamer talks of leaving us to save his soul, because some of his brethren, as he thinks, are acting improperly,—he is like a shepherd, who, on seeing some wolves enter the fold, immediately took to his heels, under an apprehension that the proprietor of the flock would cashier him, if, instead of staying to defend his charge, according to the best of his power, he had not ran away, and left them to their fate. Such a shepherd would be more fit for a lunatic asylum, than for the care of sheep. His sin, in such a case, does not consist in abiding by his post, but in deserting it.

I do not wish for better proof of the calumnies which our preachers have suffered, being undeserved, than the fact, which their slanderers admit, that the great body of our people enjoy the life and power of godliness. The history of the world will not furnish an instance of a corrupt priesthood producing a virtuous people. Every thing generates its own kind. You do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles. The old adage is still true—Like priest, like people. A soul cannot be renewed without the Spirit of God giving efficiency to the Word; and if he will connect his agency with the ministry of covetous and ambitious priests, and render their labours effectual to the conversion of tens of thousands, then you are furnished with an answer to the apostle's knotty questions—"What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" 2 Cor. 6. 14, 15. No, no: such alliances are unnatural and impossible. And if it be, as Christ hath affirmed, an unpardonable blasphemy, to say, "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils;" it cannot come far short of the same awful crime, to suppose that He casteth satan out of the hearts of the children of disobedience, by the *ministers* of satan.

As the revilers dare not attack the character of our people, their vituperation of the preachers is unmerited

and unjust. Having shewn it to be contrary to Scripture, reason, and experience, that the priesthood should be corrupt, when the church is pure, the accusers of the brethren stand convicted before the world of bearing false witness against their neighbours.

4. OF MEMBERS.—They are admitted into the church to be trained up for heaven. Of course, they are not all perfect christians; for it requires *time* to bring them into that state. Some remain who turn out hypocrites; others fall away; and others make slow progress, and are occasionally overtaken with a fault. Those, therefore, who will be satisfied with nothing short of a perfect church, must wait till they get to heaven, (though it is very doubtful whether they will ever arrive there,) before they find one. It would be well for such people to consider, whether they be fit for such a society, and whether their admission into it would not spoil its character! None but perfect christians should be tenacious of being united to a perfect church. The great majority of the members, indeed, must be the subjects of grace, or their fellowship cannot be the communion of saints; but the seceders, as has been already remarked, have not left us because the private members, generally, are not good people; the purity of the body, therefore, need not be defended.

2. It becomes a duty to separate from a church when it imposes any thing sinful. We must obey God rather than men; and if we cannot retain our membership without violating our consciences, the voice of duty imperatively demands, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate.” 2 Cor. 6. 17. Nothing sinful was required of you by the conference. You were not commanded either to play the organ, or to read the liturgy. And if you think it sinful to join in worship where these are used, you must be reminded, that in the chapels in Leeds there is no liturgy, and that in three out of the four you might be comfortably accommodated without hearing “the sound of the organ.” If you contend that all the members of a religious community are involved in guilt, when such things are tolerated in *any* of their places of worship; then you must be reminded again, that by your own connexion both these offensive things are adopted. You do not pretend, I believe, that you were obliged to commit, sin, in any thing else, had you continued amongst us. The truth is, there is nothing enjoined by our connexion to hurt any man’s conscience. It was the *pride* of your

seducers which was hurt: they were determined to govern the body, both preachers and people; and when they found they could not accomplish their design, they abused the preachers, set up for themselves, and persuaded you to submit to their yoke.

3. It is lawful to separate from a church when the means of salvation, or of general edification, are wanting in it. You cannot assign this as your reason for leaving us. For you profess that you found salvation amongst us, and that, up to the time of the late unhappy dispute, the means of grace were spirit and life to your souls. And in these you have made no alteration. You hear the same doctrines from the pulpit, as formerly. The sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, you receive from your own preachers, or, if you prefer it, from the church clergy,—just as when you were with us. You have set up no new means of grace, but adhere to class meetings, band meetings, prayer meetings, lovefeasts, and watchnights. You have, therefore, no religious helps superior to those you formerly enjoyed. The protestants of the reformation differed essentially from you in these matters. They divided from the church of Rome, because of her corruption of worship, as well as of doctrine. They deemed the mass, the worship of men, women, and angels, and prayers for the dead, to be idolatrous and superstitious; and they abolished them. They objected to the sacraments of the papists, that five were added to the original number, that baptism was vitiated by puerilities and absurdities, and that the Lord's-supper was poisoned by priestly adulterations; and they rejected those of popish invention, and purified the two of Divine Institution. Had the protestants retained the mass, the seven sacraments, the adoration of the host, angels, saints, and sinners; and all the other abominations of Rome; what would have been thought and said of them? Had they admitted that the popish services were wells of salvation to them, and that in them they had received pardon, regeneration, and a regular growth in grace,—how could they have justified their secession? Such extravagance in the reformers, would have ruined their cause for ever.

I know of no other justifiable causes of separation than the three to which I have adverted above. And as you cannot defend your conduct on any of these grounds, you are guilty of disturbing the peace of the church, and of sowing discord among brethren. But since many other

reasons have been assigned for the rash step you have taken, I must proceed to examine them.

It has been affirmed that our plan of discipline is opposed to the rights of free-born Englishmen, and is destructive of liberty. Your governors have been loud in their appeals to the British constitution, claim its privilege of being tried by their peers, and spurn the slavery of being tried by a superior order of officers. One would suppose, while listening to their declamations against the degradation which the sons of freedom suffer in this land of liberty, while members of the methodist society, that our civil constitution existed in Palestine, in the days of Christ and his apostles, and that they took it for their model in framing their ecclesiastical polity. The New Testament knows nothing of the British constitution. We not only grant, but contend, that for excellency it stands unrivalled. But we do not forget that Christ's kingdom is not of this world; that it differs from all civil establishments in its nature, its principles, and its end; and that, consequently, the best constitution for the state, would be quite unfit for the church.

Let us see how far this principle of the state is carried in your laws. The election and trial of local preachers, and leaders, is by their peers: here the analogy ends. If this principle of our civil constitution be so excellent in the church, why do you object to us for adopting it in any instance? and why do not you carry it into every grade of your own society? You have heard much of the *farce* of itinerants trying itinerants among us; but when local preachers try local preachers among you, then this is the noble privilege of Britons, and the glorious liberty of the sons of God! Since this principle is so liberal and spiritual, why have not your people the benefit of it? Your laws say,—“Private members of society shall be tried by the Leaders' Meeting.” Look at this, and see how you have been hoaxed. You were promised the liberty of being tried by your peers, like free-born Englishmen; and your passions were roused almost to phrensy at the thought of the ignominy you suffered in being deprived of this right; and now the battle is over, and your new constitution is promulgated, you are just in the same condition as when you were with us, before you engaged in this conflict; for you were amenable to the Leaders' Meeting then, and you are so still. That the troublers of our Israel, at the time they were inflaming

your minds against us, had no intention of granting you the boon they promised, is evident; for they could as easily have decreed that private members should try one another, as that they should be tried by the Leaders' Meeting; but by such a rule they would have lost the prize they so boisterously contended for, which was not to increase your liberty, but to gratify their own pride and ambition.

If election and trial by peers be the great privilege of the church, why are your missionaries deprived of it? You do not allow them any such privilege. They are to be approved by "the local preachers' and quarterly meetings" as *eligible* for the office; and then the committee of elders, &c. are "authorized to call out and employ *such* missionary candidates as they may *approve*." Missionaries have no more to do with the trial of their own body, than with their appointment. "They shall be subject to the same rules as the preachers," i. e. *Local preachers*.* One of these rules is—"Should any charge of immorality or want of conformity to our rules, attachment to our doctrines, or want of ability for the work, be preferred against any preacher, it shall first be sent to the presiding elder, who shall be empowered to summon a special preachers' meeting for the occasion, if necessary, and to call before them the person preferring the complaint, and also the accused person; and after investigating the case, they shall have power to suspend the accused preacher from office, until the ensuing Quarterly Meeting, whose decision in the case shall be final."† Here are two tribunals, the local preachers' meeting, and the quarterly meeting, competent to try a missionary, neither of which is composed of his peers. But besides these two, he is amenable to another tribunal, that of the missionary committee, consisting of elders and others, to which his colleagues have no access. The committee are "authorized to employ such missionary candidates, as they may approve, and as the state of the funds, and calls for assistance may justify." So that should a missionary offend these gentlemen, they can be at no loss for a pretext to dismiss him, without any trial at all:—The "calls for assistance" have ceased, or "the funds" are in a declining state, or they do not "approve" of him; and

* The protestants call their itinerant ministers, *missionaries*; and those who in the old connexion are denominated *local preachers*, are by them termed simply, *preachers*.

† Rules, p. 16.

he may go a begging as soon as he pleases. Here is the liberty of an Englishman, granted to a missionary, by protestants maintaining the most liberal system of church government in christendom ! He has given up his worldly employment to serve the church of Christ ; and is liable to be sent adrift in a trice, by a knot of jealous elders, who have, perhaps, taken umbrage at his faithfulness.

It will serve to unveil the mystery of the above enactments to keep in mind that one person may hold several offices ; he may be an elder, a local preacher, and a leader ; but the office of elder is supreme. The elders, therefore, have taken care of themselves. I have shewn in my first Letter, that there is no tribunal before which they can be arraigned. Every office they can grasp is to be inviolable. The leaders' meeting may have several elders in it ; and, therefore, leaders are to enjoy the rights of Englishmen, and be tried by their peers : the same remark applies to the local preachers. But elders are not private members ; and, therefore, these are deprived of the privilege : and as missionaries might be dangerous rivals, they are in the same predicament ; and may be trampled under foot by their *superiors* whenever they fail to deport themselves with becoming humility !

There is another rule which ill accords with our civil constitution. "In the elders' meetings and *all other* meetings, every thing shall be decided by a *majority* of votes,—the chairman to have but *one* vote."* In our courts of judicature, a *majority* does not decide a case :—the jury must be *unanimous*. And was it ever known that the chairman, or judge, in any of our courts, was associated with the jury, and gave a vote on the fate of the prisoner ?

In the state, it is essential to liberty that the people have representatives in the legislature, *of their own choosing*. But the private members in your connexion cannot send a single deputy to the yearly meeting. If the state, then, is to be the model of the church, as the brawlers about the liberties of Englishmen are perpetually vociferating, why have they deprived you of all access in your own persons, or by your chosen delegates, to the legislative assembly ? The want of conformity to the British constitution, it would be easy to shew, is greater in your spiritual code than in ours ; if you left us therefore under an expectation that your Rules were to

be in accordance with our civil code, you begin to see, I hope, that your rulers have left you in the lurch ; and till the above anomalies are explained, I hope we shall not be annoyed with any more silly invectives against the preachers, as the destroyers of English liberty.

In a letter from a protestant methodist inserted in your Magazine for August last, and addressed to the editor, the writer remarks, "As you have *frequently stated* that the Conference laws of methodism are contrary to reason, to the British Constitution, and to the New Testament ; and as the Conference preachers stiffly deny such declarations, I beg leave to suggest, that in order to settle the dispute, you should print, in separate columns, some of the laws to which allusion has been so frequently made in your excellent miscellany, and also those of the British Constitution, those of the New Testament, and lastly your own ; the religious public will then be able to form a correct judgment upon the subject." The editor I presume approved of the suggestion, or, at least, *wished his readers to think so*, or he would not have given it currency. But none of your people have furnished the *printed columns*. Those of them who have thought upon the subject, know better. Their *frequent statements*, without any attempts at proof, appear to answer their purpose admirably well. So long as you are willing to be gulled in this way, you will certainly be supplied with these "*frequent statements*." The writer, however, seems to have been nearly weary of them, and modestly hints that they ought to be authenticated ; and by this time, your credulity, I hope, has begun to stagger. In my former Letter I exhibited in parallel columns the discipline of the New Testament, of Conference methodism, and of Protestant methodism ; and I have the pleasure of knowing already, that the view I presented has satisfied the minds of hundreds. For reasons already assigned, we do not consider the laws of the realm as exactly adapted to the government of the church ; a little discordancy, therefore, between the two codes, does not occasion to us any embarrassment. But since the British statute book is supposed by your people to be of equal authority with the New Testament, in matters of ecclesiastical discipline ; you are obliged to shew the agreement of your laws, with the laws of the land. When your advocate shall come forth to make out his demonstration, I beg he will just glance at the following contrast.

THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION,

THE PROTESTANT METHO-
DISTS,

1. Recognizes two distinct legislative assemblies.

2. Gives the king a veto on every proposed law.

3. Gives the people a right to elect their own representatives in the Commons' House of Parliament.

4. Would be destroyed, were all the Members of the House of Commons *elected* by officers of the executive government.

5. Allows of trial by peers to all the people.

6. Does not decide the fate of a prisoner by the vote of a *majority* of the jurors; but by their *unanimous* voice.

7. Does not permit a Judge to vote in any criminal cause.

1. Protest against it; and have provided but one.

2. Protest against it; the power of legislation being exclusively in the Yearly Meeting.

3. Protest against it; their private members not being allowed to send a single representative to the Yearly Meeting.

4. Allow none to vote for legislators but members of the local preachers' and quarterly meetings; and these all belong to the executive government.

5. Protest against it; and deprive their missionaries and private members of the privilege.

6. Protest against it; and decide every cause by a *majority* of votes.

7. Protest against it; and empower their chairmen to give a single vote in every cause.

Was it not worth while to leave us, that you might enjoy the benefits of the British Constitution in the protestant society!!!

Much has been said respecting the *degrading document*, as it is termed, which was read to the leaders, and to which their assent was required as a qualification to sit in judgment on the disaffected. It was deemed a reflection on their honour, and implied a suspicion of their attachment to methodism. Where there was no proof of this, it was contended there ought to have been no jealousy;

and it was considered unjust to bring a man to such a test, whose methodistical loyalty could not be impeached without it.

As much misconception has prevailed on the subject of this paper, I will give it verbatim from the stewards' book.

“We, the undersigned, members of the Leaders' Meeting assembling at the Old Chapel, taking into consideration the troubles at present existing in the society, and especially the reports which have been widely circulated in newspapers respecting the proceedings of a part of the members of this meeting, do feel ourselves called upon to express our cordial attachment to Wesleyan Methodism, and our determination to discharge our proper duties in the methodist society, by freely subscribing* our names, in token of our cordial assent, to the following Resolutions.

“1. As our regular weekly Leaders' Meetings are sufficient for the transaction of the business of the society, and our Quarterly Meeting for the business of the circuit, —and as other meetings of leaders, local preachers, and others, called without the knowledge and consent of the superintendent, are contrary to the Rules of Pacification,† and tend to disunite and divide us, we unreservedly engage not to attend any meetings of that description, but to conform ourselves to our existing laws on that subject.

“2. As it has been reported that many of the leaders of this meeting have united in a determination to advise the members of their classes not to pay their usual contributions, we hereby engage to observe and enforce in our classes, our old rule on that subject, not only by receiving what the members are willing to give, but by prudently, and in the spirit of christian kindness, advising them, as need may require, to contribute as God hath prospered them.

“3. We hereby renew the engagements which we either virtually or formally made when we were first appointed to our office as leaders, to act in all things as God shall give us grace so to do, in conformity with our excellent discipline, which we believe, as a whole, to be agreeable to the word of God; and it is our determination to seek for ourselves, and press upon the members of our classes,

* As some hesitated to *subscribe*, who approved of the Resolutions, the *verbal* expression of their *assent* was accepted as sufficient.

† See Minutes, Vol. 1. p. 376.

such a heartfelt belief of those essential doctrines of the Gospel which are taught amongst us, as shall produce in our lives, and in theirs, all the peaceable fruits of righteousness.”

That there was an organized opposition to the preachers and some important Rules of the connexion, made by leaders and local preachers, who held their regular secret meetings, in which a chairman presided, and a secretary minuted down the resolutions and proceedings,—no one now pretends to deny. And that no society, civil or religious, could long subsist in which such things should remain unnoticed, is too plain to require any proof. And yet, it seems, no test is to be applied, in the absence of positive evidence, to ascertain who are the guilty party. And where did your protestant agitators learn this? Here they bawl about the liberty of Englishmen, and the liberty of the gospel, at a most marvellous rate; taking care, however, to avoid any specific reference to either the law of the land, or the testimony of God. Let us hear what these have to say upon the subject.

The great principle of the celebrated Alfred’s government was to make his subjects responsible for one another. “That he might render the execution of justice,” says Mr. Hume, “strict and regular, he divided all England into counties: these counties he subdivided into hundreds, and the hundreds into tithings. Every householder was answerable for the behaviour of his family and slaves. Ten neighbouring householders were formed into one corporation; who under the name of a tithing, decennary, or fribourg, were answerable for each other’s conduct; and over whom one person, called a tithingman, head-bourg, or borsholder, was appointed to preside. When any person in any tithing or decennary was guilty of a crime, the borsholder was summoned to answer for him; and if he were not willing to be surety for his appearance, and his clearing himself, the criminal was committed to prison, and there detained till his trial. If he fled either before or after finding sureties, the borsholder and decennary became liable to enquiry, and were exposed to the penalties of law: thirty-one days were allowed them for producing the criminal; and if the time elapsed without their being able to find him, the borsholder, with two other members of the decennary, was obliged to appear, and, together with three chief members of the three neighbouring decennaries, (making

twelve in all,) to swear that his decennary was free from all privity, both of the crime committed, and of the escape of the criminal. If the borsholder could not find such a number to answer for their innocence, the decennary was compelled by fine to make satisfaction to the king, according to the degree of the offence. By this institution every man was obliged, from his own interest, to keep a watchful eye over the conduct of his neighbours; and was in a manner surety for the behaviour of those who were placed under the division to which he belonged."

In this case, when one of the community had violated the law, the rest were made responsible; and if they could not produce twelve good men and true, living in their vicinity, to *swear* to their innocence, they had to suffer the penalty. This was something more than a verbal assent to the laws, as a qualification to act as jurymen. And remember this excellent king instituted the trial by jury. The moral influence of his laws, and his love of liberty are thus noticed by Hume. "Such success attended his legislation, that every thing bore suddenly a new face in England: robberies and iniquities of all kinds were repressed, by the punishment or reformation of the criminals: and so exact was the general police, that Alfred, it is said, hung up by way of bravado, golden bracelets near the highways; and no man dared to touch them. Yet amidst these rigours of justice, this great prince preserved the most sacred regard to the liberty of his people; and it is a memorable sentiment preserved in his will, that it was just the English should for ever remain as free as their own thoughts."

The testimony of Scripture supports this principle of mutual responsibility. In Deut. xxi. 1—9, the case is put, of a murder being committed by a person or persons unknown. Suspicion immediately falls upon the inhabitants of the nearest city; who, to clear themselves, are obliged, by their elders, to sacrifice an heifer; "And all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley: and they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them. So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent

blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the Lord."

In the above instances, the parties against whom there was no evidence of guilt, when a crime was committed by an associate or in their vicinity, were required to clear themselves of suspicion by the most solemn protestations of their innocence. Now the document in question makes no inquiries into the past, but merely gives a pledge as to the future. Had they all been guilty, no confession was required; but only a promise of obedience for the time to come. The superintendent's test, therefore, was much easier than either of those appointed by Alfred and Moses. According to the laws of Alfred, the oaths of the inhabitants of the tithing to which the delinquent belonged, was not sufficient to clear them: the oaths of nine other persons belonging to three neighbouring tithings were necessary to remove from them the reproach and punishment of a crime committed by one of their associates. And in the case mentioned in Deu. xxi 1—9, the city might be several miles from the place where the murder was committed; but that did not excuse the inhabitants from the trouble of clearing themselves of all participation in the crime, by the most solemn declarations, and the most awful ceremonies. Had they been like our protestants, they would have stood out most stiffly against the degradation of making such confessions and expiations.

Some of the violaters of our laws were known, and the superintendent determined to sift the matter to the bottom. They treated him with ridicule and contempt, set him at defiance, and boasted that a large majority of the leaders were in their favour, had attended the illegal meetings, were pledged to stand by them, and would acquit them. Common sense, and English law, and the word of God, all agreed to assure him, that the ends of justice could not be answered, if a delinquent were tried by his partners in guilt; and as this was the character given of many of the jurors by the accused,—he disappointed their expectations and spoiled their mirth, by providing the test. Then came forth the dolorous lamentations against packed juries, despotic priests, and infringements on British liberty.

This document merely ragarded their qualifications, as jurors, to try those against whom charges were preferred, for violating the laws of the society. The reason of the case requires that those who try others should be impartial

themselves—free from any strong bias either for or against the accused. In our civil courts, a man is not thought to be degraded by a test; for every jurymen is put to his *oath*. There, a mere declaration is not thought sufficient; and if a jurymen were to hector the judge respecting the degradation a free-born Englishman must endure, to be obliged to make oath that he will deal fairly between the King and the prisoner at the bar, and decide according to the evidence,—he would soon find himself in a box, not quite so comfortable as the jury-box. But before he is brought to this test, he may be excepted against by the prisoner, and dismissed, without any reason being assigned for it: and so on the other side,—if he be suspected of partiality to the prisoner, he may be ordered off unceremoniously: for “In cases where the King is party, the justices of goal delivery, or of the peace in sessions, may reform the panels of jurors, by putting to, and taking out of the names of the persons impanelled, by their discretion.”* This is carrying matters a great deal further than just requiring an expression of approval of the constitution, and a determination to abide by the laws.

In all cases when rebels are known to be in a place, all the loyal subjects in it will be as anxious as government officers can be to detect them; and will, therefore, cheerfully submit to any test which appears likely to answer that purpose. None but the rebels and their friends can object to this. So it was at Leeds. The faithful leaders who, contrary to the predictions of the disaffected, formed the majority, were thankful for the test. When men will rather abandon methodism, than express their approval of it, we know what state their hearts are in; and it is high time “they went out from us.”

Many who refused this test left us; but none were expelled for not subscribing or assenting to it. The non-conformist leaders, as they then called themselves, might have all continued *in office*, as well as in the society; and the past would have been buried in oblivion, on a promise that they would attend no more opposition meetings. The following resolution was passed by the Leaders’ Meeting Dec. 10th, 1827:—“That the *dissentient leaders* who will not from this time explicitly engage to desist entirely from attending those opposition meetings, which so manifestly lead to a division, be now removed

* Williams’s Justice, Vol. III. p. 18.

from their *office*.” “A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.” To have kept in their office men who were determined to attend *opposition* meetings, would have amounted to a surrender of discipline, and a dissolution of the society. If you left us, therefore, on account of the test, you left us because your superintendents would not give up the whole of our discipline, and act contrary to the laws of both God and man. Think on these things; and may God open your eyes to see your sin and danger.

The suspension of the local preacher who acted as secretary in the illegal meetings, created a strange uproar against the itinerant preachers, as being arbitrary and despotic men, who invaded the civil and religious rights of the local brethren. Let us see.

With regard to the religious part of the question, the inquiry is, whether the local preachers ought to govern itinerants, or the contrary. I have proved in my former Letter, from the *express* testimony of scripture, that itinerant preachers, or evangelists, had authority to appoint and depose elders. It is as plain from the New Testament that the elders were local officers, as that the itinerants had jurisdiction over them. Some of the elders, at least, were local preachers. “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.” 1 Tim. v. 17. It is agreed on all hands that labouring in the word and doctrine, denotes *preaching*. Here, then, are local preachers, who were elders also, over whom the evangelist Timothy had authority. There were, no doubt, in New Testament times, some local preachers who were not elders; and as your “elders must be preachers,” and as you have local preachers who are not elders, you cannot dispute these points with me, without disputing against yourselves. But if the evangelists presided over the local preachers who were elders, as we have seen they did, they must also have been superior to the local preachers who held no other office. The more offices a man holds, the greater is his dignity. This principle is admitted amongst you; for the local preachers who are elders may preside in preachers’ meetings; but a mere local preacher cannot even *attend* a meeting of elders, and cannot preside in a preachers’ meeting, if an elder be present. The conclusion then is, that, according to the New Testament and common sense, evangelists or itinerants,

are superior to all local preachers, whether they be elders or not.—But the same conclusion may be come to in a more compendious way. Titus, who was an itinerant preacher, was not only authorized to “ordain elders in every city,” but was also empowered to “set in order the things that were wanting;” which words contain a general licence to appoint any officers, or perform any act of discipline, according to his discretion. But this would not, and could not, have been the case, if the supremacy, or even a *veto* on Titus’s acts, had been lodged in any local officers whatever.

Having demonstrated from the Scripture that itinerant are superior to local preachers, and have jurisdiction over them, it only remains, to complete the defence of the Leeds superintendent, to shew that Scripture does not require a judge in a spiritual court to submit the decision of the penalty to a *majority* of the peers of the accused. This is easily done. St. Paul, though absent, decided on the expulsion of the incestuous Corinthian. 1 Cor. v. 3, 4, 5. Timothy was charged, as having to answer to God for it in the day of judgment, to be impartial in his censure of sinful elders; but had this point been determined by a majority of elders, they must have been answerable for it, and not the evangelist. 1 Tim. v. 19, 20, 21. Titus was charged to *reject* an obstinate heretic; which he could not have done, had he merely presided in a meeting, in a majority of which the power of rejection was placed. Other examples might be given; but these are more than sufficient.

As the governor of a church is responsible to the head of it for its external purity, he must possess the power of administering discipline on the factious. This power is reserved by our laws to our evangelists; and it is a power which they cannot give up to any body of men, unless these men could procure a transfer of the responsibility to themselves. But that is impossible, since God has not left these matters to the option of his ministers: He has connected the duty with their office; and however disagreeable to flesh and blood, (and there is no duty they have to perform so unpleasant as this,) they are bound in conscience, as they dread His displeasure, to discharge this duty with impartiality. When the venerable Wesley was traduced as a lover of power, and tyrannical, because he held the reins of discipline in his own hands; his usual reply was, as may be seen in his writings, that God

had laid it upon him, that he felt it as a great burden, and that he would gladly have resigned it to others, if he could have done so with a clear conscience. But to give our people the best security they can have against clandestine expulsions, the conference have decreed that the guilt of the accused, whether he be an officer or a private member, shall be proved in the proper meeting, to the satisfaction of a majority of the brethren, before the superintendent can pronounce sentence. Beyond this, I have shewn from the word of God, he is not authorized to go.

The result of this examination of Scripture evidence, as it applies to the case in question, is plainly in favour of the Leeds superintendent. The evangelists of the New Testament, we have demonstrated, had jurisdiction over local preachers, and all local officers, as well as private members; and to their discretion and impartiality is entrusted the penalty to be annexed to established guilt.

The next point in this case is to enquire, How far the superintendent has deviated from the laws of the land, and invaded the liberties of our freeborn Englishmen. From the first the local brethren at Leeds appear to have been most active in opposition to their own preachers, and to the conference. When at a *proper* local preachers' meeting the secretary of the illegal meetings was called to account, he neither denied that he had called and attended these meetings, nor that they were contrary to our rules; and instead of making any concession, he gloried in what he had done. In English law, when a man acknowledges the truth of the charge, the jury have nothing to try, and the judge proceeds to pass sentence. The precipitancy of the young man in confessing the violation of rule, left his brethren nothing to do; they could not deny the fact, in the face of his insolent avowal of it; and the superintendent felt that, under these circumstances, he must either resign his authority, or make an example of the offender:—he suspended him from office for a short period. A most dreadful clamour was raised against this act, as arbitrary, unconstitutional, popish, &c. Mr. Barr having quoted the rule, remarks, “Now from the rule itself, it is evident, that the sentence could not be taken, as no penalty is attached to its non-observance.”* Mr. Barr ought to have known that it is seldom any penalty

* Statement of Facts, p. 23.

is attached to our laws; and the reason is, because the degree of guilt connected with their violation depends so much upon circumstances, that many folios would be insufficient to mark the various shades of criminality, and to adjust the proper degrees of censure:—it has been thought best, therefore, to leave this matter to the discretion of the superintendent. In the administration of justice in our courts of law, this is very much the case. The degree of punishment is not settled by the jury, but by the judge; and in many instances the law has entrusted a great deal to his discretion.

But it is further objected,—“As in the laws of general pacification it is stated, that no local preacher shall be taken upon the plan, without the consent of the body, it is a fair presumption, that no local preacher can be expelled, and consequently not suspended, without their consent.”* It is as good an argument, to say “As no local preacher shall be taken upon the plan without *his own consent*, so neither can he be suspended or expelled without *his own consent*.” Once more,—“As no gentleman can take a seat in the Commons’ house of Parliament, without the consent of the electors, so neither can he be expelled without their consent.” But in spite of this conclusive way of drawing consequences, members have been expelled without their constituents having been consulted.

And so Mr. Barr seriously thinks that the superintendent ought to have asked and obtained the consent of the other local preachers, before he inflicted the censure! He has told us also, in the preceding page, what the opinion of the local preachers was on this act of discipline. “The local preachers protested against such a measure, and contended that they ought, as a body, to be consulted upon the propriety of such a step, and declared that if any guilt attached to the conduct of the accused individual, which they denied, that every other local preacher who had taken part in the proceedings, was equally culpable; for that the condemned person had only acted in the capacity he had sustained, as secretary to the meetings, at their united request.”† This is one of the most singular paragraphs ever penned. A person takes his trial for violating a certain law, pleads guilty, and a slight censure is passed upon him. Against this several of the

* Statement of Facts, p. 23.

† Ib. p. 22.

jurors solemnly protest :—they do not deny the fact, that the accused person had broken the law, but deny that any guilt attaches to his conduct, and insist that they ought to have been consulted on the propriety of awarding any punishment at all. But how do they make it out that no guilt attaches to this violation of law? Why, because they “were equally culpable;” and what he had done was “at their united request!” Was impudence like this ever matched! They had employed him to break the law, and they would sit as jurors if he were brought to trial, and, in spite of law, would screen him from the consequences of transgression; but when his effrontery left them nothing to try, and the court, knowing their participation in his guilt, did not choose to consult them on the sentence; why, then they raise a hue and cry against the tyranny and oppression of the preachers!

Well, what was done next? Their oracle informs us, that “The view taken by the local preachers generally, of the suspension of one of their body, for doing an act in which they had all participated, was correct; they felt it an attack upon the whole of them; and they properly considered, that he was but the ostensible, and themselves the real party. It is then to the everlasting honour of from fifty to sixty of them, that they spontaneously resolved to consider the sentence of the suspended individual, their sentence, and his punishment, their punishment; and that they would preach no more until the sentence was revoked, or the period of punishment terminated.”* Here is the spirit of our freeborn Englishmen. Let us suppose something like this to transpire in the state. A man is accused of theft, and when brought to trial makes a full confession of his crime. In this case the jurors have nothing to do; and the court proceeds to sentence him to three months imprisonment. At this, the foreman steps forward, and insists, that the jury ought to have been consulted on the measure of punishment, because “they had all participated” in the crime; that the sentence was “an attack upon the whole of them; that he was but the ostensible, and they the real party; that they had spontaneously resolved to consider his sentence, their sentence, and his punishment, their punishment; and that they would” accompany him to prison, and share in his confinement! This would, no doubt,

* Statement of Facts, p. 25.

redound "to their everlasting honour ;" and I dare pledge myself, that the county would cheerfully supply them with bread and water, till they should recover their senses, and reform their manners.

But this subject must be viewed in another light. These preachers, it appears, had no sense of Divine obligation resting on their consciences, to induce them to fulfil the ministry they had received ; but felt themselves quite at liberty to suspend their labours, without any call from either God or his church. 'These are a most singular sort of protestants. Their ancestors did not act thus. Their conduct would have appeared in a very dubious light, if, when one of their number was silenced, the rest had all protested, that they would not speak another word in the name of the Lord, till he was restored. Instead of this, they continued at the hazard of their lives to labour after they were prohibited. But these new-fangled protestants can preach or not, just as the whim seizes them. All feeling of duty and responsibility to God must have been extinct, before they could come to the rash determination to suspend their own labours.

We have seen in this transaction the state of their feelings in relation to methodism, the itinerant preachers, and Almighty God ; it only remains to see how their hearts were affected towards the people. If the superintendent and conference had offended these gentry, what had the people done, that they must be deprived of the means of grace ? The consequence of the voluntary suspension of the local preachers is thus explained by Mr. Barr :—"Such a determination produced, of course, the greatest consternation among the travelling preachers, well knowing that many of the chapels would be almost unavoidably left without a preacher." And that this might be the result, the local preachers kept their determination a secret as long as they could ; so that it was only the day preceding the sabbath that the travelling preachers became apprized of it. And so these local preachers contrived, if possible, to deprive their congregations of the ministry and the other religious ordinances connected with it. If this be not taking the devil's part, I do not know what is. This shews better than volumes of profession could do, what hold the congregations had on the affections of these men. But then, the success of the scheme would have "produced the greatest *consternation* among the travelling preachers ;" and no doubt, the greatest *joy* among the

local preachers. And why this difference in the feelings of the two classes of preachers? I know of only one explanation—The protestants could jest, like infidels, with the religious feelings of their hearers; and our preachers felt anxiously concerned to promote their spiritual and eternal interests. Had the itinerants cared no more for the souls of the people than their calumniators did, instead of being seized with consternation, they could have joined in this protestant laugh! Out of the mouth of your apologist we judge you, ye wicked servants. You must have been strangely infatuated, to think that you were bound in conscience to leave us, and unite with men who could make your privation of spiritual ordinances, matter of profane mirth!

But the Special District Meeting! None of our writers, it is said, have ventured upon a defence of that! So far from this being true, we have scarcely a writer who has omitted it. Mr. Watson has demonstrated that a constitution like ours, cannot subsist without something of the sort, but must crumble into independent churches; and none of his opponents have dared to grapple with his main arguments. Mr. Welch, too, has taken up the same line of argument in a most masterly style; and your champions have deemed it prudent to let him alone. And Mr. Beecham has proved beyond successful contradiction, that Special District Meetings are strictly methodistical. I have already noticed two of the principal particulars objected to the Leeds meeting,—the sanction they gave to the test and to the suspension of the local preacher; and I have said enough, I hope, to satisfy any reasonable mind that upon these points the preachers of the Special District Meeting do not merit censure, but are entitled to praise.

It is contended, however, that the Meeting was illegally constituted; the president having invited persons who had no right to attend, and the superintendent having invited three *distant* instead of three *of the nearest* superintendents. Had the meeting, thus constituted, *tried* the offenders, I think the act would have been illegal; but they did no such thing; they merely gave *advice* to the superintendent, as to the *mode* of trial; and attended the trial of two or three of the disaffected, without presuming to give a vote. What was there illegal in this? Has not a superintendent a right to ask advice of any of his brethren, in a case of difficulty? I hope he will not be

denied this privilege by freeborn englishmen. We all know how common it is for a judge to consult his brethren on intricate subjects. And what law was violated by the mere *presence* of the preachers at these trials? None whatever, either Divine or human.

Your people it appears, however, from recent occurrences have adopted a much more expeditious method of dealing with officers and members who are deemed refractory. Some time ago a leader of your connexion at Holbeck, near this town, for some cause was deprived of his office and membership. Some time after he commenced meeting in class, and was admitted a private member. Afterwards he was proposed as a fit person to be again a leader, and was elected by a large majority of the Leaders' Meeting; only one or two being opposed to him. A leader of the Holbeck society complained to the Quarterly Meeting against this re-election; and the Meeting decreed, and wrote to the Holbeck leaders, that they had done wrong in putting this person again into office, and that his re-election was void. The Holbeck leaders were not enlightened by such logic, and refused to undo what they had done. When the proper season arrived, an elder from Leeds, a great stickler, no doubt, for the liberties of Englishmen, attended at Holbeck to renew the society's tickets. When he came to the class of the re-elected leader, he refused tickets to him and all his members. The Holbeck leaders were highly indignant at this mode of treatment of one of their members and his class, and held a parley with the meek-spirited elders of Leeds, at the last quarterly meeting; but these gentlemen, partly by threats, that they could convert the Holbeck society into an independent church; and partly by promises, that the affair should be presented for final adjudication to the next Yearly Meeting; obtained a trifling majority in favour of a despotic act which never had its equal in our connexion. Neither the leader nor his members were tried by a Leaders' Meeting, or received any notice of trial before any tribunal whatever. Thus the matter stands at present. My authorities for the above facts are quite satisfactory. A few remarks on them may be proper.

With the fitness or unfitness for his office, of the leader in question, I have nothing to do. Suppose, if you please, that he is every way qualified for it; and then the injustice of the treatment he has received is vividly

apparent. If you suppose him to be unworthy, you see the necessity of a controlling power *somewhere*, to correct the errors of subordinate jurisdictions, and to bring them into harmony with the general system. That is the business of our Special District Meetings; and you cannot object to these, if you imitate them. But your laws have not vested any such power in any class of officers. The great outcry from the beginning to the end of the answer to Mr. Watson, by your London brethren, is, that the local authorities ought to be maintained inviolate. But here the decision of a Leaders' Meeting is annulled by a message from a Quarterly Meeting. Though you have made no provision for such a case in your laws, yet you have no sooner set your system to work, than you find that it cannot go on, without the intervention of an authority similar to that against which you have been protesting. And though Mr. Watson's argument, that the want of all power of revision of local decisions must issue in independency, has been publicly denied in the boldest manner, yet we perceive from the threat held out to the Holbeck leaders, that your rulers feel his argument to be conclusive!

And this case is to be referred to the Yearly Meeting! But your laws have given no judicial authority to that august assembly. And have you forgotten that two of the chief reasons of the division were, that we allow a power to Special District Meetings, in certain cases, to settle differences which the local authorities cannot; and to the conference, to receive final appeals. And now your masters have discovered the secret, that they cannot keep you together for a single year, without having recourse to similar means!

The quarterly ticket is the token of membership, and the withholding of it is the mode of expulsion. The rule says, p. 12, "The mode of excluding a private member, shall be by withholding the ensuing quarterly ticket." As this token of membership was withheld from the leader, as well as from his members, he was excluded the society, as a member; and as no man can be a leader who is not a member, he was put out of office as well as out of society, by the same act. Now look at this case. Here is a leader and his class all turned out of society by a single elder, without any trial at all; and the Quarterly Meeting approve the arbitrary act! And all this in the face of rules which require that "private members of society shall be tried by the Leaders' Meeting;" that

“on the appointment or trial of leaders, the leaders alone shall be allowed to vote;” and that “to prevent every thing like unfair or clandestine expulsions” of leaders, a certain process of trial is ordained, adapted to secure justice to the accused. But all these enactments are swept away, like a spider’s web, by the hand of a single elder. Here is your glorious liberty !

If there were any sinners in this business, they were the Holbeck leaders, and not the leader and members who were expelled. Just examine the case a moment. These leaders were hectored by the Quarterly Meeting for re-electing their brother. Neither he nor his members can be blamed for the act of the Leaders’ Meeting, which placed him over them. The leaders refused to depose him; and how could he or his members be blamed for that? If the elder, therefore, thought himself authorized to visit the offence with excision, the contumacious leaders were evidently the offenders, and not the party who suffered: these received no message from the Quarterly Meeting, no notice of trial, no summons to appear before any tribunal, no trial of any sort: they were cut off by a single elder;—the leader, because he would not resign his office at the bidding of this important personage; and the members, because they would not abandon a leader placed over them by their own Leaders’ Meeting, and not legally deposed.

You have seen much in your Magazine from time to time, of the blessed spirit of union and love which prevail in your meetings, and of the mighty power of God, which rests on your assemblies, now that you are emancipated from the thralldom of the old connexion; and there is much of this cant in the number for the present month; but no notice is taken in this truth-telling periodical, of the heavenly tempers, and the heavenly language, which flowed with amazing rapidity up to the midnight hour, in your last Quarterly Meeting, while this subject was under debate.

Before we have any more blustering on the *Leeds case*, as your people call it, we shall have some explanation, I hope, of the *Holbeck case*. Compare the timidity of more than twenty of our preachers, in confining themselves to mere *advice*, with the despotic air of your elder, who alone, and at a single blow, audaciously strikes out of your society a whole class with their leader. The advice offered by our preachers was sound and good; they saw no necessity for

setting aside the ordinary tribunals; they only recommended a test for the purgation of the jurors. No judge would allow a jury to try a prisoner, if he knew that some of them were his partners in guilt. He would try to get a *honest* jury; and he would not be deterred from this by the clamour of the disaffected, in calling it a *packed* jury. In our case, no law was set aside; in yours, every law applicable to the subject was fearlessly trampled upon.

Our people, generally, are warmly attached to methodism, and require much dexterous drilling to prepare them to turn their backs upon it. You were warned from the first, that your seducers were driving at this point; but this was denied in the most solemn manner. Mr. Watson had charged the London protesters with a design to make a separation. In the review of their reply, which appeared in the Protestant Magazine for September last, it is said, "The pamphlet proceeds to repel the charge of a factious desire of innovation which Mr. Watson had thrown out; a charge which it successfully refutes—stating in the words of former publications from that circuit,—‘we do not yield even to the Conference itself, in ardent attachment to the constitution and discipline of the connexion, as laid down by Mr. Wesley: *we wish for no changes in the system of methodism*; but we are content and satisfied with that system as it has long been established in this circuit....These solemn declarations of a whole circuit, attested by the signatures of the circuit stewards in the first instance, and subsequently by those of 104 officers of the church, many of them of the highest character for respectability, piety, and long standing in the societies, will, we think, have weight with the connexion.’ Yet all this attestation was, it seems, inadequate to gain the credit of truth with Mr. Watson.” And Mr. Watson was right; for in spite of all these protestations and attestations, as soon as they had succeeded in alienating the affections of a few of the people, they threw off the mask, and went away.

Now let us hear what Mr. Barr had to say in reply to a similar charge against the Leeds agitators. "A strong effort is making on the part of the preachers, both from the pulpit and the press, to induce the societies to believe that those who are resisting the arbitrary proceedings of Conference, are wishful to create a division, *and to establish another religious body*. Of all the vile insinuations employed by the preachers to calumniate them, *not one is*

farther from the truth than this." I am glad of that, Mr. Barr; for, since the event has shewn that they spoke the truth in this instance, it follows, that all they have said of the protestants is as true as the gospel. Mr. B. was so confident that the preachers were mistaken in surmising that his friends intended "to establish another religious body," that he turned prophet upon it:—"I tell the preachers in Leeds, and their bad advisers, that in all this they will be disappointed."* Mr. B. wishes "the dissentients to be judged by their *actions*." Very proper, Sir. But what can the most candid person in the world make of all these solemn and awful protestations, when he compares them with the facts, that a separation has actually been made by them, and that the new system differs essentially from every form which methodism had ever previously assumed! I leave such professions and conduct to make their proper impression on your minds; and am

Yours,

Affectionately and faithfully,

D. ISAAC.

Leeds, May 28th., 1830.

P. S. As the protestants cannot answer the arguments contained in my former letter, they are trying to console themselves by defaming my character. They are now circulating with the greatest impudence and industry, that I have abandoned the principles of church government contained in my "ecclesiastical claims." They have the assurance to represent me as denying, in that Work, "that any order of men existed in the primitive church, superior to elders." Compare this with the following paragraph, which is in perfect accordance with the sentiments contained in the letter. "The presbyters were subject to the evangelists, or itinerant preachers, such as Timothy and Titus. And the methodist leaders are subject to the itinerant preachers."† Throughout that book, presbyters, elders, and bishops, are taken for the same class of officers; and there is, what I still think, a very conclusive argument to shew, that the elders of the New Testament answer to the leaders of the methodist connexion. My opponents would not invent and propagate such glaring falsehoods, if the desperate state of their cause did not, in their esteem, require it. I have crushed the head of the serpent; and I am not surprised that in his writhings he attempts to bite my heel.

* Facts, p. 19.

† Eccles. claims, p. 143.

